

A
Seasonable Discourse
SHEWING
The Necessity of UNION
AMONGST
PROTESTANTS
In Opposition to
POPERY,
As the only Means (under God) to preserve the
Reformed Religion

ALSO,
The Charge of Persecution, lately maintained against the Established Religion by *W. P. H. C.* and other *Insignificant* Scriblers, detected; Proving it to be the Ministers of *State*, and not the *Church*, that Prosecuted the *Penal Laws* on *Protestant Dissenters*.

PRINTED in the Year, 1688.

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Seasonable Discourse

ON THE

The Necessity of UNION

AMONGST

PROTESTANTS

In Opposition to

POPERY

As the only means (and the only way) to preserve the

Reformed Religion

The Charge of Persecution is now made
and against the Established Religion
by the Catholics and other Papists
and is now being used to the
destruction of the same and not the least
of the Protestants the Papal Law on that
point.

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THE known saying in the *New-Testament*, That a *Kingdom divided can't stand*, is very seasonable at this Juncture, by all *Protestants* to be seriously considered: And if ever *Unity* (if not in *Worship*, yet in *Love* and *Affections*) will be necessary, it must certainly be *Now*; when the *Common Enemy* is seeking, by all means imaginable, to correct such *Divisions* amongst *Protestants*; as if possible to render them irreconcilable *One* to the *Other*. And though the *Differences* are not extraordinary; yet it has been the *Policy* of those that delight in the *Division* and *Destruction* of *Heresicks*, (as they call them) to widen the *Breaches*, and, as much as possible, divide the *Interest* of *Protestants*. To effect this *Design*, how often have we heard of the many *Disguises* and *Shapes* they have appeared in, among all sorts of *Protestants* (none excepted); and it is lamentable to think, how great an effect they have had on *Passionate Men*, of all *Persuasions*. But now, considering the circumstances of *Things*, and how darkly they appear to *Judicious* and *discerning Eyes*, it's high time for all *Parties* to lay aside *Pride*, *Passion*, or *Division*; and, as far as possible, agree to *Love* and *Serve* each *Other*. The doing of which, is the only effectual Means to establish a lasting *Union* among *Protestants*, and to subvert the *Designs* of *Plotting-Men*, who would gladly over-tum our *Religion* and *Laws*. The *Considerations* above-mentioned; caused me to give the best *Advice* I could: I must confess; not only my inability, but also my engagement in *Business*, very much prevented my *Design*: But however, what I here offer, comes from a sincere *Desire* for allaying the *Heats*, and uniting the *Interests* and *Affections* of *Protestants* in general. I hope, I shall not offer any think contrary to *Reason*, and the *Publick Good* of *Mankind*. I shall begin with the *Church of England*.

Worthy Sirs, The former *Passion* and *Violence* of some few *Rash Men* amongst you, together with their *Zeal* to serve an ungrateful sort of *Men*, rendered almost the whole *Body* obnoxious to the hard *Opinion* and *Censure* of many *Worthy Men*; insomuch, that those who were really *Members* of the *Church*, as by *Law* establish'd, were at a stand, and did not know what to think of the strange and unaccountable *Speeches* and *Actions* of many, both *Clergy* and *Laiety*: But, as this Fault can be imputed to but a small part of you, so I have that *Charity* to hope, they are, by this time, fully convinced of their *Error*, and will act more *Prudently* for the future. The heat of a few *Rash Men* ought not to bring so *Venerable* a *Body* of *Men* into contempt; for by that *Rule*, the most *Innocent* would be liable to answer for the most *Guilty*; the Injustice of which, can't be sufficiently declared with Abhorrence.

My humble Advice is, As you have always manifested your *Loyalty* to the *King*; so continue Obedient *Subjects*, as far as the *Laws of God* and the *Land*, warrant your *Obedience*, and no farther are you actively obliged to *Obe*; (as to your *Passive Obedience*, ye are no Strangers to the meaning of it; therefore, I wave it;) Let your *Obedience* to the *Divine* and *Human Laws*, thereto agreeing, be without the least *Hesitation* or *Reluctancy*: But, if any thing be commanded by *Man*, you must always remember your prime *Obedience* is due to *God*; and no *Commands*, *Threats*, or *Allurements*, ought to Influence you so, as to violate the *Laws of God*, or the *Land*; always have an Eye to the *Divine*, which infinitely supercedes any *Command* or *Human Law*. For Instance, if at any time you are required to renounce your *Sence* and *Reason*, and believe *Transubstantiation*, or to *Worship Images*, *Invocate Saints* and *Angels*, or any other thing, contrary to *Scripture*; or to change your Holy, Pure, and Sound *Religion*, to embrace another, abounding with *Novelties*, full of *Human Inventions* and *Absurdities*; and that has little or no foundation on *Scripture* or *Reason*: You are not, on any pretence whatsoever, to forsake your certain *Religion*, for the embracing of *One*, not only *dubious* but *dangerous*: And let me assure all wavering *Christians*, (who, for *Worldly Interests* and *Preferments*, care not what *Religion* they are of) That they cannot Answer it to *God*, if they make Shipwreck of a good *Conscience*, by turning from a safe and rational *Religion*, to that which is not only *unreasonable*, but very *ridiculous*, in the judgment of all Good *Christians*. Since the *Protestant Religion* is founded on *Reason* and *Truth*, consonant to the *Holy Scriptures*, the practice of the *Apostles*, and *Primitive Christians*, in all *Ages*; you, and all that desire to approve themselves sincere *Protestants*, ought to continue steadfast in that *Divine Faith*, you profess your selves *Members* of. If your *Religion* was built only on the *Sandy Foundations* of *Tradition*, *Infalibility*, &c. you might have some tollerable *Plea* for altering your *Opinion*; but as long as your *Religion* teaches you *Obedience* in all Things to *God*, and likewise to your *Sovereigns*, in which you have found *Expositions* of the *Divine Truths*, the *Sacraments* duly and truly administered in both kinds, according to *Christ's Institution*; the *Scriptures* no ways *Lock'd up* from *Clergy* or *Laiety*, (Because all these, and what-ever more is necessary for the ordering of a *Christian's Conversation*, is to be found in the *Protestant Religion*) I can't conceive, why any one should change his *Profession*. *Worldly Interests*, *Troubles*, or *Temptations*, ought to have no sway or force with us, when they come in competition with our *pure Religion*. I have enlarged the more on this *Head*, by reason now is a time of greater tryal than formerly; and that some, who not long since esteemed themselves *Pillars* of the *Protestant Faith*, have now, for sinister *Ends*, without *Reason*, departed from it. But let them seriously consider, there is a *God* above, who will not be *Mocked*. Such *unstable Souls* I shall leave to that *God*, who judg-
eth

eth all Men, and rewardeth All according to their *Deeds*, whether *Good* or *Evil*.

In the next place, Let the *Laws of the Land* be your *Rule*; Be sure give no advantage to the *Common Enemy*, either by a partial Execution of them, or by doing less than the *Laws* allow: neither strain them too *high*, nor let them be as a *Cypher*, which will signifie nothing, without the *Figure* of Execution. As the publick Good and Welfare of *Mankind*, was the design of all *Laws*; so the Conformity to, and Execution of them, ought to have the same tendency. To strain any *Law* beyond the designed *Good*, or *Intent* of the *Legislators*, is a most severe and unjust *Oppression*; and to *suspend*, or let wholesome and beneficial *Laws* lye *dormant*, without all due Execution for the *Publick Good*, does not only shew the unfaithfulness of the *Magistrate*, to whom the *Executive Power* appertains; but also, how little he minds his *Sworn Duty*, which is to see the *Laws* duly put in Execution; and *Justice*, according to them, equally distributed without *Partiality*; and how any can Answer the *multifying* them, without a Lawful *Abrogation*, by the same Power that *Enacted* them; I can't possibly conceive; for the common approved Maxim is, *That Power only that made any Law, has sufficient Authority to suspend or repeal the same*. The *Laws of the Land*, so long as they are founded on *Reason*, and found beneficial to the *Publick Peace* and *Welfare* of the *Kingdom*, ought to be kept *Inviolable*, and maintain'd by All; but more especially by those that have any share in the *Execution* of them. We should reckon him a *Mad-man*, that should *un-til* his House, under pretence of keeping out the *Rain*. Likewise, if a Governour of a well Fortified City, who wanted for no Accommodations requisite for the defence of it, should, without any just cause of Fear of his Inconsiderable Enemies, either out of *Cowardice* or *Persidiousness*, betray the City, and make himself and them, not only void of *Power*, but in effect *Slaves* to the Will and Pleasures of that part of Men, to whom he and they might have bid defiance. What can we say or think of such *Escans*, that are ready to sell their *Birch Rights* for a *Mass* of *Portage*, but that they shall not deserve any *Compassion*; and if they undergo the greatest *Evils*, they will have the just *Reward* they have deservedly Merited. I should not pity any Man, that, under pretence of keeping out *Thieves* and *Robbers*, should open the *Door*, and let them in; wholly trusting to their good *Breeding*, *Kindness*, and *Honesty*; nor in the least believing they would be so unmanly, as not only to secure him, by binding his *Hands* and *Feet*, that he could not help himself, but also Rob him of all that was worth their carrying away; stopping his *Attain*, that he could not complain of his hard *Usage*, or call for any help, to free him out of his miserable *Condition*. I wish, in the Land of *Utopia*, there were not too many, that would shew the same kindness to those kind Hearted *Christians*; that should divest themselves of the *Power* and *Security*

the Law gives them, and meerly trust to their good *Nature*, for their *Religion*, and all their *Liberties* and *Properties*. Any Man, with whom the Administration of *Justice* is Intrusted, or that has the Honour to be Elected a Member of *Parliament*, for the Service of his *King* and *Country*; for such a Man to betray his *Trust*, either by *parting* with those *wholsome Laws*, that long experience tells us, are absolutely necessary, and most beneficial to the *Common-Wealth*; or by condescending to the unreasonable *Desires* and *Endeavours* of an inconsiderable sort of Men; or by not *abstracting*, but *consenting* to the Enacting of *New Laws*, destructive to the *Common Good*; He is most unworthy of the *Trust* reposed in him, and deserves the severest *Punishment* the Law will admit of: No *Contempt*, *Disgrace*, or *Derision*, can be bad enough for such a Man, that to serve his own particular private *Interest*, will *Sacrifice* the *Publick*. All *Members of Parliament*, when they design to make any *Laws*, ought thoroughly to consider, what *Good* or *Benefit* will accrue to the *Subjects* thereby; and if, upon mature Consideration, they see a necessity of Enacting such *Laws*, by no means ought they to be *omitted*, or *laid aside*. On the other side, if former *Parliaments* had, for weighty *Reasons*, made several *Acts* for the security of our *Religion* and *Laws*; before these *Laws* be made void by a *Repeal*, due respect ought to be had to the circumstances of *Things* and *Times*; and, after a strict and impartial Enquiry be made, if it shall appear that the Repealing those *Acts* will not only very much *injure*, but really *endanger* the *Publick Peace* and *Welfare* of the *Kingdom*; then, notwithstanding the Solicitations of a *Party*, whose *Interests* oblige them to desire it, they ought not to part with *Laws* which will prove as an *impregnable Bulwark* against our *Enemies*. To make void an useful and necessary *Law*, under a pretence of doing *Good* to the *Publick* thereby, is like the taking up of a *Sluce* to prevent an *Inundation of Water*. I may rather compare it to the throwing of *Combustible Matter* into an *House on Fire*, thinking thereby to *Extinguish the Flames*; which is so far from putting a period to them, that, on the contrary, it heightens the *Flames*, that they are not (if at all) easily *Mastered*. I have heard our necessary *Laws* compared to the most useful *Damms* and *Banks* in *Holland*, to prevent the raging *Sea* from over-whelming them. It's well known to *Travellers*, of what a vast Importance those *Defences* are: for, should there be a considerable Breach made in any of those *Damms*, that secure them from the violence of the *Water*; not only many *Souls*, *Beasts*, and many other *valuable Things* would be lost; but it would be an *Immenſe Charge* to repair them: But, though the damage to the *Netherlands* would be very great, should such a bad accident happen; yet it's the *Opinion of Wise-men*, (and not without good grounds) that should *Engliſh-Men* and *Protestants* part with those *Laws*, that are like a *strong* and *impregnable Defence* to them, and their *Religion*, in *one Respect* it would be of a far worse consequence to them;

them; that is, the loss would be irreparable; and Ten Thousand to One, if ever the like Security can be obtained. Country-men have an Old but True Saying; that is, *If you love to be free from a Broken Head, keep fast the Staff in your own hand*; so may you not only prevent your being beaten by your own Weapon, but, in case of an Assault, you may, by being in a posture of Defence, easily defend your self from violent Hands; whereas on the contrary, a Naked Man may easily be Captivated; and, whether he will or no, he will be constrain'd to submit to the Mercy of his Insulting Enemy. It's farther observed, That after the Rich Farmer has, with much difficulty, gotten a good Estate, he remembers how hardly he Laboured, Tilled, and Smeared, before he brought things to so good an Issue; and the calling to mind his former Inestimable Labour, has this effect on him, That since he obtain'd his Riches or Substance with so small Care and Industry, he is resolv'd, because he neither got it easily, nor can he dispence with the want of it, that he will not do like Prodigal Sons, who being Born to their Estates, and wholly Ignorant of their Parents Care and Trouble to provide for them, quickly squander away vast Fortunes; but though he may love his Children or Friends with all the real Affections imaginable; yet says he, *Charity begins at home, I will not make my self a Beggar, and stand in the Contrast of Children or Friends, for whom I shall want to sustain me, so that I may comfortably end those days that remain*. For moral Experience too frequently informs us, That Children and Friends too soon forget their Duty, and the innumerable Kindnesses of their tender Parents. Since things are thus, let common Prudence dictate better things to us, than to part with what of right belongs unto us, or to let go that joyful Security we have, for all that is dear unto us; and by so doing, we may easily prevent our being made a Prey to our implacable Enemies, from whose tender Mercies, God, Lord deliver us. I might much more enlarge on this particular; but should I proceed to enumerate all the manifest Dangers and Inconveniences that I could easily insist on, I should cry out with the Poet, *Tamce mores eras Romanum condere centem*.

In the third place, Let your Zeal for your Holy Religion continue, and let your Moderation be seen by your very Enemies; and let not the worst of them, have any just cause of laying any severe or undecent Actions to your charge. How will it please your Enemies, to see you differing and dividing your Interest and Affections with those? That a Worthy, and most Learned Member of your Church, in my hearing, lately Preach'd against excommunicating by Excommunication, from Communion with you, for indifferent Things, which may be left undone, and yet Salvation obtained. The reasons he gave for loving them were, Because there were many good Christians among them; and because they profess'd against the same Errors, believed the same Articles of Faith, and hoped for the same common Salvation by Christ, that you do. You

can't but be deeply sensible, how many Eyes are fixed on you, and what desires your *Enemies* have of seeing you exposed to *Publick Shame* and *Contempt*: Have *Charity* towards all Men, especially to all those of the *Protestant Religion*, that in any tolerable Measure conform to the Rules of it. As for your *Dissenting Neighbours*, (like the Reverend Doctors, *Till* and *Ten*.) let your Love and Moderation be so great towards them, as if possible, though you cannot make them satisfied with your Reasons for *Conformity*; yet let your *Christian Charity* and *Affection* to them as *Protestants* and *Members* of the same Body you profess to be, have such an Influence over them, as to expel any Malice or prejudice they might have entertain'd against your Persons; and who knows, but such Methods as these, may have a great Influence towards a farther *Conformity*. It's my Opinion, (and not without Reason) That the bitter *Invectives* not long since, in and out of the *Pulpit*, created greater and fiercer *Enemies* against the *Church of England*, than otherwise she would have had; but as this has sometime since ceased, so *Charity* ought to be exercised, in forgetting what was amiss; in hopes the like may never be heard again.

My Advice to you *Dissenting Protestants*, is, for the most part, the same I gave to the *Church of England*: I need not enlarge any farther on the absolute necessity of *Unity* and *Charity* among *Protestants* at this Season, when it is very manifest, that nothing is more delightful or acceptable to those that hate the *Protestant Interest*, than to see one *Protestant* rending, tearing, and back-biting another: It being too apparent, that these *Fishers of Men* delight in troubled Waters, knowing it to be the fittest time and opportunity to overcome their *Heretical Enemies*, (for so they call *Protestants*) when their *Dissensions* among themselves are greatest. Therefore, I earnestly perswade and entreat you, as you tender the Peace and Welfare of the *Kingdom*, and the establishing your sound *Religion*, to put on a Spirit of *Mildness*, *Charity*, and *Compliance*, as far as possible, with the *Church of England*; and if you can't receive satisfaction enough from her *Learned Members*, thoroughly to *Conform*; yet let not your *Charity* be so narrow, as to have a bad Opinion of those *Worthy Men*, that are abundantly satisfied with the reasonableness of their *Conformity*. As you desire no harsh *Censures* be put on you for *Nonconformity*; so be sure you avoid reflecting on those *Pious Men*, that hold it lawful to dissent and dissent to all the *Articles* of the *Church of England*. If possible, have Peace with all Men, especially with those of the same Household of *Faith* you profess. Strongly endeavour to prevent bitter *Invective Speeches* against that Church; which, in all probability, is like to be the only *Invincible Bulwark* against *Papery*. And I am the more inclin'd to be an earnest Advocate for the *Church of England*, not only because I have hopes she has laid aside those bitter Things formerly with some Truth laid to her charge; but chiefly because a vast number of her *Worthy*, and eminently *Learned Members*,

have,

have, with great Learning and Solidity defended our Holy Religion, from the *Heresies, Schisms and Novelties* falsely charged on it by the *Church of Rome*. All Persons that Study any thing to the purpose of the Controversie betwixt us and them, must certainly perceive, how admirably they have confuted the unreasonable and unaccountable Doctrines of that pretended Infallible Church; clearly proving the *Truth and Excellency of the Protestant Religion*; and that we are not (as they pretend) beholding to them for it: But evidently making it appear, that the *Protestant Faith* is most ancient; and that its Doctrine is consonant or agreeable to the *Word of God*; and the practice of the *purest Christians*, in the *Primitive Times*. This very consideration alone, is sufficient to clear the Body of that Church from being *Papistly affected*.

A second Reason to Love and Esteem them for, is, their firm adhering to the known *Laws* of the Land; for what ever a few unsound *Members* of her *Communion* have done to the contrary, yet she is not accountable for them; the greatest and most considerable part, having been found very faithful on that account.

A third Thing, for which you ought to value the *Members of the Church of England*, viz. Their stedfast adhering to the Rights of the *People*; and especially of the *Church*. Their *Consciences* have been so just, that notwithstanding the Angry Frowns of Majesty have taken hold of them, and that they have, and are likely to suffer very much by it, they rather chuse to trust God with their Temporal Felicity and Comfort, than sinfully violate those Sacred Oaths they have so Solemnly taken, by betraying (in the least) the Trust reposed in them; notwithstanding the Frowns or Allurements of the greatest Men. This only single Instance of their *Signal Fidelity to God and Man*, ought to have no small sway or Influence with all considering Persons. He that orders his Conversation according to the Divine Rule, and faithfully Studies to preserve the just Rights and *Lawful Liberties* of Mankind; deservedly Merits the greatest Love and Affection imaginable. But he that makes no Conscience of his Duty to God, and designedly makes Ship-wrack of the Lawful Rights and Privileges of any *Party or Society*, and that will sell his Birth-Right for an inconsiderable Value, deserves not the Name of a Man; nor to be admitted into the Society of Mankind. I desire you would imitate the *Church of England*, in all those things for which I justly commend her. In the first place, Follow her Loyalty as far as you can, and not break the *Laws of God nor Men*, thereto corresponding. In the second place, Be fervent and constant in the Sacred Religion you profess yourselves Members of. You know, without doubt, the greater part of you, the Transcendent Excellency of your Religion; and therefore, if any of you should, for Interest or Preferment, turn from *Truth to Falshood*; from *Light to Darkness*; from a *Sound to a Corrupt Religion*; How great and unpardonable would so wilful a Sin be? And, to

Speak the Truth, I must do you the Justice to commend you for your firmness
 in your holy Profession; in that I have heard few or none, that have either
 gone over, or been perverted to the Communion of the *Church of Rome*, not-
 withstanding the alluring Favours of that Church towards you, and practice
 of her *Clergy and Laity* to gain Profelytes among you. What I shall say on
 this Head, is, *Go on, and Prosper*; and, without doubt, the Spirit of Truth will
 guide and direct you for the best. In the third place, Imitate their Fidelity
 to the Laws of the Land: You can't, but with admiration, perceive how
 stedfastly they labour to preserve them, and all the reasonable Rights and
 Privileges of the People. As you are Rational Men, professing the *Protestant
Religion*, and render the *Publick Good*, let not any uncertain Transitory Interest
 prevail with you, so far, as basely to give up your *Religion*, and the known
 useful *Laws* of the Land; he sure you neither consent to the suspending or
 taking away any, that (so all Intelligent Men) are like to prove your only
 Security. When the *Country-man* designs to preserve his *Grain*, from those
 Creatures that would Eat it up, or otherwise spoil it, he is far from rooting
 up the Fence that secures it: So ought you carefully to preserve the *Laws*,
 for your own and the *Publick Safety*. Things at present look, to your perhaps,
 with a good Aspect: I wish they may long continue in that condition: But,
 if the course of things should mightily alter, and these *Holm Days* (of which
 you have no assurance) should not long continue, how greatly would your
 hopeful expectations be frustrated? Therefore, be sure you do not impru-
 dently purchase your present Liberty, and seeming Favours, at too dear a
 rate; for such acts may wholly deprive you of the Favours, that you may o-
 therwise expect from the next Successor, &c. But strenuously endeavour to
 manifest to the World, that your former great outcries against the late In-
 frusions of your *Religion, Liberties, Properties*, and the *Laws* of the Land, were
 really in earnest, and that as then you truly hated those that were in any mea-
 sure guilty of them: so now, if something lies in your Power, you will not
 by the greatest Perswasions and Promises of Kindnesses, be wrought on, to
 part with the *Laws* of the Land, because you can't well be ignorant of the
 fatal consequences of so doing. If you either give up the *Laws*, or cease to
 execute those that are most necessary, you not only highly grieve and gratify
 your known *Enemies*; but by betraying your *Trust* you will render your selves
 extraordinary Odious in the Opinion of most Men; in that you are unfaith-
 ful to what you formerly so much cryed up, viz. That the *Laws* might flour-
 ish, and *Justice* might duly and impartially be distributed, and all Men qui-
 etly possess what of right belongs to them. No Honour, Wealth, or good Con-
 science, will dissuade you from Serving or Obeying your Sovereign, as far as it
 is lawful: But, in all Obedience, strict recourse must be had to the Divine and
 Human *Laws*, that the Limits of neither be Transgressed; and then the

Issue of such Obedience, will be of no ill consequence to you or the Publick ; Such Obedience will redound to your Immortal Honour.

Fourthly, Consider, if the the *Papists* in *England* were not of a rigid, violent, and ambitious Nature, they would not make all this stir about the *Test*, which debars them from a share in the Government. In *Holland* we know, that though the *Papists* are very Peaceable, and have given many Years Testimonies of their good Behaviour, under a *Protestant* Power; yet the *States*, for their own and the Publick Safety, will admit none of them into any *Offices*. I am of Opinion, and not without Reason, *Roman Catholics* here, can't give so good an account of their Peaceable and Christian Behaviour, as those in *Holland* can: Therefore, greater Arguments may be produced, why no Power ought to be granted to them in *England*: It being notoriously known, that though their Prince be a Just Man, vallyuing his Word, yet a restless Zeal moves the *Papists* (*manibus pedibusque*) to advance what they call *Catholic Interest*; which, without any Restraint, will not keep within the bounds of Moderation.

But if the *Laws* are taken off, I know not of any Obstruction they can meet with; then we must expect to be Govern'd wholly by *Papists*, and the consequence of such a Government must be terrible to *Protestants*; for what can they expect less than *Papish Lords* and *Commons*; and from such a *Parliament*, what less than a perfect establishing of *Papery* by a *Law*; and, without doubt, when such *Laws* are Enacted in favour of that Religion, as severe will be made against the growing of *Protestant Heresie* in *England*, from such *Laws*, and such *Times*, God in Mercy deliver *England*. Pray, therefore, consider, if you once give the *Papists* so much Power, whether, so soon as they have it, they will not make severer *Tests* against *Protestants*, than ever were made against the *Church of Rome*? The late Famous Actions of the *French King*, and the *Marian* Kindness of old, to *Hereticks*, are convincing Evidences of the Lenity and Moderation of a Government, wholly in the hands of *Papists*. As for the Happiness, and flourishing of Kingdoms or Republicks, under the *Papists*, See the contrary in *Dr. Burnet's Travels*.

The *Romanists*' great Ambition, and eager desire to be in Eminent Places of Trust, is enough to convince any Rational Man, that for no mean or inconsiderable Enterprises, do they contend for them: They think if once they can get into the *Saddle*, with greater ease they may Ride the poor *Hereticks*. I would advise you to Ponder, with great deliberation, the *Natures*, *Dispositions*, and especially the *Interests* of those Men, that with might and main labour to take off the *Test*. And if it shall appear, (as doubtless it will) 'tis a grievance to those only, that espouse a Foreign Interest, directly contrary to yours; and that the *Test* is a strong defence to preserve you. I hope you will manifest your real Love and Kindness to this Nation, by undergoing, for a time, as great Severities as ever, rather than in any degree be Instrumental

inruining of this now happy Kingdom (I mean in her *Laws*). I would gladly know of any Ambitious *Papist*, Whether it would not be more unreasonably bold for him to desire a share in that Government, from which he is Legally excluded, than for a *Hugonet* in *France*, where, as I never heard, were any *Laws* to exclude him, to desire to be prefer'd to no small Offices: I am verily perswaded the Body of the *Papists* there, would be very unwilling to be Govern'd by him; I think the case is not parallel, and that the *Protestants* ought to insist much more on the same Privilege in *England*.

In the *Fifth* place, Seriously think of the professed Kindness of your new Friends of the *Church of Rome*, you may and ought to consider, *Cui bono*, For what good or design, is so great Friendship pretended, and so many Favours now on a sudden confer'd and accumulated on you; who, not long since, were esteem'd unworthy of Life: You may well enquire, what occasioned so great a *Calm*, after so violent and *Tempestuous a Storm*. It must, certainly, be matter of the highest admiration to you, to see the wonderful Moderation and Clemency of the *Roman Catholics* at this time to you obstinate *Hereticks*; especially since the Members of that *Church* are now in so great Power: I say, to see a *Church*, whose Principles are directly opposite to the *Protestant Interest*, so careful the strictest sort of them; when as, not long since, the greatest Violence and Cruelty imaginable, to extirpate them, was thought not only lawful, but necessary; it's well if you find these Kindnesses real, and not to make you, what you hate to be, *Tools* for a Design both dangerous and dishonourable: To see Men, one while, breath out nothing but *Injunctives* against the *Reformed*, at another time, if it more serves their purposes, fawning and courting *Hereticks*, is enough to put considering Men on their Guard. Such unexpected Kindnesses may put you on enquiry.

First, Whether you come nearer in Belief or Practice to that *Church* now? or, whether you be as guilty of *Heresie* (as she calls it) as ever?

Secondly, Whether the usual Spirit of Persecution, and Antipathy to *Protestants* (though at present in *England* restrain'd) be not as predominant in *France*, and other places, as ever? It's well if *Roman Catholics* can Act contrary to their known and beloved Principles, in putting on a Moderation and Temper suitable to the *Gospel*. If it be clearly evinced, that *Protestant Dissenters* have not in the least obliged the *Papists*, by their receding or departing from their own Principles; or by their favourable construction of the *Articles* and Opinions of the *Church of Rome*, then it is visible their designs are (since the *Church of England* will not serve their turn) if possible, to make the *Dissenters* their *Tools*, they being the last Refuge they can fly to, in order to their Assistance. The late Actions of the *Papists*, towards you, bespeak your favourable Opinion: But the too well known Maxim amongst the *Romanists*, That Faith is not to be kept with *Hereticks*, doth justly cause *Protestants*

stands to expect no real or greater Kindnesses from them, than consists with their Interests or Designs to manifest. If the Papists shew you outwardly great Respect; and, for sinister Ends, treat you, as Friends for a while, till you have served their turn, by taking off the Test and Penal Laws, that they might be on as equal Terms as you: It's not only Mine, but the Opinion of Ten Thousand more; that not only you, but the Nation will dearly pay for the Kindnesses you have received from them: And, let me tell you, if things are so ordered, you may whistle for any place of Trust in the Government: And when all the Administration of Justice is wholly in the Romanists (as doubtless then it will be) you Hereticks must be content with such as can be got: For I know not where you can expect any Redress, or to whom you can appeal. These Considerations, I hope, will make you perceive as great a necessity of continuing those Laws, as ever there were of Enacting them, especially the Test. Pray God direct you, that you may act Prudently, for your own Credit, and the Nations Good. I have great cause to hope well of you, because, for the most part, you are Men of Consideration and Understanding, that scorn to be Accessories, much less the chief Actors, in subverting the happy Constitution of our Government.

I make no question but your wise Carriage, at this time, by being faithful to your King, your Religion, and the Laws, will so far reconcile you to the favour of the Church of England, that when ever a reasonable Opportunity shall offer for the easing of you in a Legal way, her Members will readily consent to it, for they will not be so void of all Gratitude, as wholly to forget your services to your Religion, and the necessary Laws of the Land; but if you Act contrary to the Interest of Protestants, and of the Nation, you can expect only the short Favours of the Church of Rome, and not easily to be admitted into the favourable Opinion of the Church of England, nor receive those Kindnesses from her, which otherwise you might expect. And I must profess, you will deserve none of her Favours, if you study more to serve the Roman, than the Protestants Interest: But I hope better things of you.

I shall not enlarge, having (I hope) writ enough to have convinc'd you already. I shall Answer one grand Objection, relating to the Penal Laws; The Test (as I can understand) being not much Insist'd on; unless by some Mercenary Men, whose Writings are all they have to depend on. The popular Argument, for a present Repeal, with some timorous and passionate Dissenters, is this, That the Members of the Church of England, are of a Persecuting Spirit; and as one, the other end of the City, said, That while these Rods (meaning the Penal Laws) are in their hands, they will be continually lashing Protestants: Therefore, it is (as he said) the highest piece of Prudence to take them off, while it is in their Power. I always heard a great account of the Gentleman, that his Memory was very good, his Parts very

eminent: If so, I can't but admire he forgets, or at least understands not, from whence those severe Orders, for ruining *Dissenters*, came: Nay, farther, for what Ends and Designs things were so violently carried on. Perhaps it may farther be Objected, That many of the Divines of the *Church of England*, often Zealously pressed this Persecution. I'll grant the Accusation in part; but I can the better excuse those hot Men, when I consider what *Motives, Incentives, and Promotions* came from that end of the City, that now so much condemns the *Church of England* for her Zeal to Serve the King in that particular: Since things were so carried, that no *Clergy-Men* were esteemed or preferred unless he would comply with *Courtly Orders*, in *Thundring* against *Dissenters*. As there are, amongst Men of all Perswasions, Ambitious, Indigent Men; so, I confess, there were some few such as Mr. *Thompson* of *Bristol*, among the *Church of England* Divines: But for the Richer and more Learned part of that vast Body, I am fully convinc'd, few, if any, were of that Persecuting Spirit. Farther, The Worthy Members of the *Church of England* are grateful Understanding Men; and I have that Charity for them, as not to imagine, That if the *Dissenters* be, to their Power, Friendly and Serviceable to the *Church of England* now; if it should ever lye in her Members Power hereafter; but that a trebble return of Kindness and Gratitude would by them be made.

Lastly, To conclude, I must profess, that I hate a Persecuting Spirit in Men, pretending to Christianity; and I do freely declare, I should heartily rejoyce, if this time were a fit opportunity to relieve the *Dissenters*; but, were I in their condition, as I had already undergone much, so, by the Assistance of God, I would Suffer much more, rather than, like *Sampson*, who, when he had lost part of his Strength, for Revenge, with what he had left, pull'd down the House, not only on the *Philistines*, but on his own Head. Such a Foolish Revenge would be but a poor satisfaction to a Rational Man: How aptly the comparison is made, I leave to understanding *Dissenters* to consider.

POSTSCRIPT.

I Had almost forgot Two weighty Considerations; The first is, You ought to consider, and seriously reflect on Courtly Favours and Promises; and how the Court opposed the Kindnesses design'd for you by the Westminster Parliament: I must acquaint you, That Three Parts in Four, of that Parliament, were strict Church of England Men; and that they had such a respect for you, that they unanimously pass'd a Bill for easing of Protestant Dissenters; And I can't conceive, why it was by the Court obstructed, unless because it did not extend to the Papists, as well as Dissenters: However, for Reasons best known to themselves, instead of Presenting the Bill to King Charles the Second, to have his Royal Stamp, it was lost (a thing never heard of before): This Act will sufficiently clear the major part of the Church of England, from that Odious Accusation of being Promoters of that Persecution, then so vigorously carried on: And since it clears them, it must fall heavy somewhere: I do not affirm, the Papists had any hand in losing that Bill; but I know not what to think of it. No Man can doubt, but that great Kindness to Protestant Dissenters, was really by that Parliament design'd: But there was a considerable Party then in being, with whose Interests, Designs, and Glory, such Lenity could not then consist, what ever it may do now.

Secondly, Some great Advocates for Repealing the Test, pretend to an Expedient for it; and declare, they will part with it, provided such Security as can be proposed; may be gotten: As an Expedients, in another Case, was thought Odious and Ridiculous; so now, a Nominal, and not a Virtual Obligatory Law, ought to have the same Fate. It's my Opinion, If the pretended Expedient be as Valid and Secure to Protestants as the Test, it would be equally indifferent for the Papists to let you keep what you have: And some think, if you must have a Test, it will not be grateful to the Roman Catholics. Wherein lyeth the Kindness

of the King, if he parts with any Law, and at the same time grants another as severe, to Exclude his Subjects, (whom He thinks Worthy) from all publick Places of Trust. I must freely tell you my Mind, If you are concern'd for preserving your Religion, and what is dear to you and us All, Remember, and abide by that common Proverb, One Bird in Hand, is worth Two in the Bush. You would reckon a Purchaser (though he were sure of a Penniworth) very imprudent, if he should Pay the full Value for his Land, before he were sure to receive a satisfactory Title from the Vender. As to the Promoters and Patriots of an Expedient, in lieu of the Test, In the first place, are they sure such a thing will be granted? I put the Query, because, if I am not misinformed, the Draconical Author had now thanks for proposing it, in his Answer to the Letter to a Dissenter.

To Conclude, I shall give you my Sentiments in a plain Intelligible Instance: I can as soon be wrought upon to believe an Ignorant Pretender, that shall pretend to take out my Sound Teeth, and put in a better Set in the room of them, as to Credit the Promoters of an Expedient: As I should admire at the Confidence of the former, so I should be amazed at the Ignorance of the latter. I believe the impossibility of my getting new substantial Teeth, and their getting as firm Security for the Protestant Religion, in place of the Test, will be alike equal: Therefore, be Prudent, and consider the danger of altering a well-Establish'd Government: For, it's manifest, when things are in Confusion, it's a hard-matter to set them right again.

FINIS.